UNITED
NATIONS

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.
LIMITED

CEDAW/C/1998/I/L.1/Add.1
30 January 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Eighteenth session
19 January-6 February 1998

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS EIGHTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Aurora JAVATE DE DIOS

Addendum

III. REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Chairperson of the Committee welcomed members to the eighteenth session of the Committee. She noted that, since the last session of the Committee, Ms. Tendai Bare (Zimbabwe), had been appointed Director of the General Technical Services Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London and was submitting her resignation. She emphasized the valuable contribution that Ms. Bare had made to the work of the Committee.

2. She informed the Committee that she had participated in a number of United Nations-sponsored activities, including the Asia/Pacific Meeting on Universal Adherence to Principal Human Rights Instruments held in Amman, Jordan from 1 to 4 September 1997 which had been convened by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The object of the meeting had been to encourage ratification of human rights instruments. She noted that 17 of the States that had participated in the meeting had not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The meeting had offered a useful opportunity to identify obstacles to ratification and strategies to overcome them.

3. The Chairperson had attended the eighth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies held at Geneva from 15 to 19 September 1997. She

reported that the major item on the agenda of the meeting had been the report of the independent expert on "enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty system". The chairpersons had considered that it was both impractical and undesirable to create a single treaty body to monitor all the human rights conventions. They were of the view that each committee might seek ways to focus on a limited number of issues pertinent to each country to help reduce the length of periodic reports. The chairpersons had recommended that members of treaty bodies should refrain from participating in any aspect of the consideration of their country's report in order to maintain impartiality, both in substance and appearance, and that Governments should refrain from nominating persons for election to treaty bodies whose political or other functions may not be reconcilable with the obligations of independent experts. The chairpersons had invited the Division for the Advancement of Women to prepare an analysis of how gender was being integrated into the work of the United Nations treaty bodies for presentation at the next regular session of the meeting of chairpersons, and had proposed holding a seminar to explore these issues.

4. The Chairperson also informed the Committee about the Copenhagen Seminar for Social Progress, held from 3 to 5 October 1997, the objective of which had been to follow up the 1996 Social Summit and determine the relationship between the process of economic integration and globalization and social conditions. From 14 to 16 October, the Chairperson had also attended a regional workshop organized by the Middle East regional office of the United Nations Children's Fund in Beirut, which had examined ways to incorporate CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child into the curriculum of law schools in six Arab States. The concept of women's and children's rights in the Arab world had been discussed.

5. The Chairperson had attended the meetings of the Third Committee of the General Assembly from 19 to 23 October 1997. In her statement, she had highlighted the progress that had been made in the implementation of CEDAW and had called for further ratification and acceptance of the amendment of article 20(1) relating to the Committee's meeting time.

6. The Chairperson informed the Committee that she had written to those countries which were not yet parties to the Convention, urging ratification by the year 2000. Moreover, she welcomed the fact that Ms. Angela King, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, had written to those States parties which had not submitted their initial reports, urging their swift compliance with this obligation. She noted with appreciation that Mr. James Gustav Speth, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, had written to Resident Coordinators requesting them to encourage Governments to ratify or comply with reporting obligations under CEDAW and to assist where needed in preparation of initial reports.

7. The Chairperson reported that she and three other members of the Committee had attended the Commonwealth Medical Association interregional round table on women's health convened in London on 15-16 November 1997. The round table, which had been preceded by a Day of Dialogue with non-governmental organizations involved in health and reproductive rights, had provided useful input to the Committee in its formulation of a general recommendation relating to article 12.

8. The Chairperson noted her concern about the situation of women and children in Algeria, and that the initial report of the country was under preparation and would be considered by the Committee at one of its coming sessions.

9. She also expressed disappointment that the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women had been unable to attend the session as originally planned, but noted that the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance would be meeting with the Committee, as would Mrs. Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights. She thanked Ms. Cartwright and Ms. Shalev, who had carried out major responsibilities on behalf of the Committee between the seventeenth and eighteenth sessions with regard to a paper on reservations and the general recommendation on women's health.

10. Finally, the Chairperson noted that, while there had been improvements in the functioning of treaty bodies, working methods of CEDAW could be further improved, and she welcomed any suggestions in that regard.